DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 466 424 SO 033 952

TITLE	The Zimmermann Telegram. Teaching with Documents.
INSTITUTION	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-06-20
NOTE	9p.; For additional "Teaching with Documents" materials, see SO 033 946-953.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. Tel: 866-272-6272 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-837-0483; e-mail: orderstatus@nara.gov. For full text: http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/teaching_with_documents.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Standards; National Standards; *Primary Sources; Secondary Education; Social Studies; Student Research; Teacher Developed Materials; *United States History; *World War I
IDENTIFIERS	*Cryptography; Document Analysis; National Civics and Government Standards; National History Standards

ABSTRACT

Between 1914 and the spring of 1917, Europe engaged in the conflict known as World War I. The United States remained neutral. In January of 1917, British cryptographers deciphered a telegram from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmerman to the German Minister to Mexico, Heinrich J. F. von Eckhardt, offering U.S. territory to Mexico in return for joining the German cause. This message helped draw the United States into World War I and changed the course of history. In an effort to protect their intelligence from detection and to capitalize on growing anti-German sentiment in the United States, the British waited until February 24, 1917, to present the telegram to President Woodrow Wilson. The U.S. press published news of the telegram on March 1, 1917. This lesson plan provides the background for the incident; identifies the National History Standards and National Civics and Government Standards correlations; presents three learning activities; and offers primary two documents--the coded telegram and the decoded message. Contains a written document analysis worksheet. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 466 424

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES & RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

www.archives.gov June 20, 2002

TEACHING WITH DOCUMENTS

The Zimmermann Telegram

National Archives and Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20408
1-866-325-7208

http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/zimmermann_telegram/zimmermann_telegram.html

SO 033 952

2002

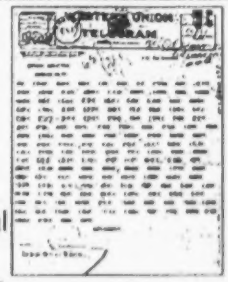
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan:

The Zimmermann Telegram

Background



Between 1914 and the spring of 1917, the European nations engaged in a conflict that became known as World War I. While armies moved across the face of Europe, the United States remained neutral. In 1916 Woodrow Wilson was elected President for a second term, largely because of the slogan "He kept us out of war." Events in early 1917 would change that hope. In frustration over the effective British naval blockade, in February Germany broke its pledge to limit submarine warfare. In response to the breaking of the Sussex pledge, the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany.

In January of 1917, British cryptographers deciphered a telegram from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German Minister to Mexico, von Eckhardt, offering United States territory to Mexico in return for joining the German cause. This message helped draw the United States into the war and thus changed the course of history. The telegram had such an impact on American opinion that, according to David Kahn, author of *The Codebreakers*, "No other single cryptanalysis has had such enormous consequences." It is his opinion that "never before or since has so much turned upon the solution of a secret message." In an effort to protect their intelligence from detection and to capitalize on growing anti-German sentiment in the United States, the British waited until February 24 to present the telegram to Woodrow Wilson. The American press published news of the telegram on March 1. On April 6, 1917, the United States Congress formally declared war on Germany and its allies.

The story of British intelligence efforts to decipher the German code is fascinating and complicated. *The Zimmermann Telegram* by Barbara Tuchman recounts that story in all of its exciting detail. It is an excellent historical account for high school students.

The coded telegram is from Decimal File 862.20212/82A (1910-1929), and the decoded telegram below is from Decimal File 862.20212/69 (1910-1929), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59.

The Documents

Document 1: Coded Telegram
National Archives and Records Administration
General Records of the Department of State
Record Group 59

Document 2: Decoded Message
National Archives and Records Administration
General Records of the Department of State
Record Group 59

Lesson Resources

Standards Correlations

Teaching Activities

Document Analysis Worksheet

Page http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/zimmermann_telegram/
URL: zimmermann_telegram.html

U.S. National Archives & Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408 • 1-86-NARA-NARA • 1-866-272-6272

Teaching Activities

Standards Correlations

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

- Era 7-The Emergence of Modern America (1890 - 1930)
  - Standard 2B-Demonstrate understanding of the causes of World War I and why the United States intervened.

This lesson also correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

- Standard IV.A.2-Explain how nation-states interact with each other.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history and mathematics colleagues.

Teaching Suggestions

1. Decoding a Message: In this exercise, students decode a fictitious message using a simple substitution code. As homework, ask students to write a message using the code, and then exchange the messages for decoding.

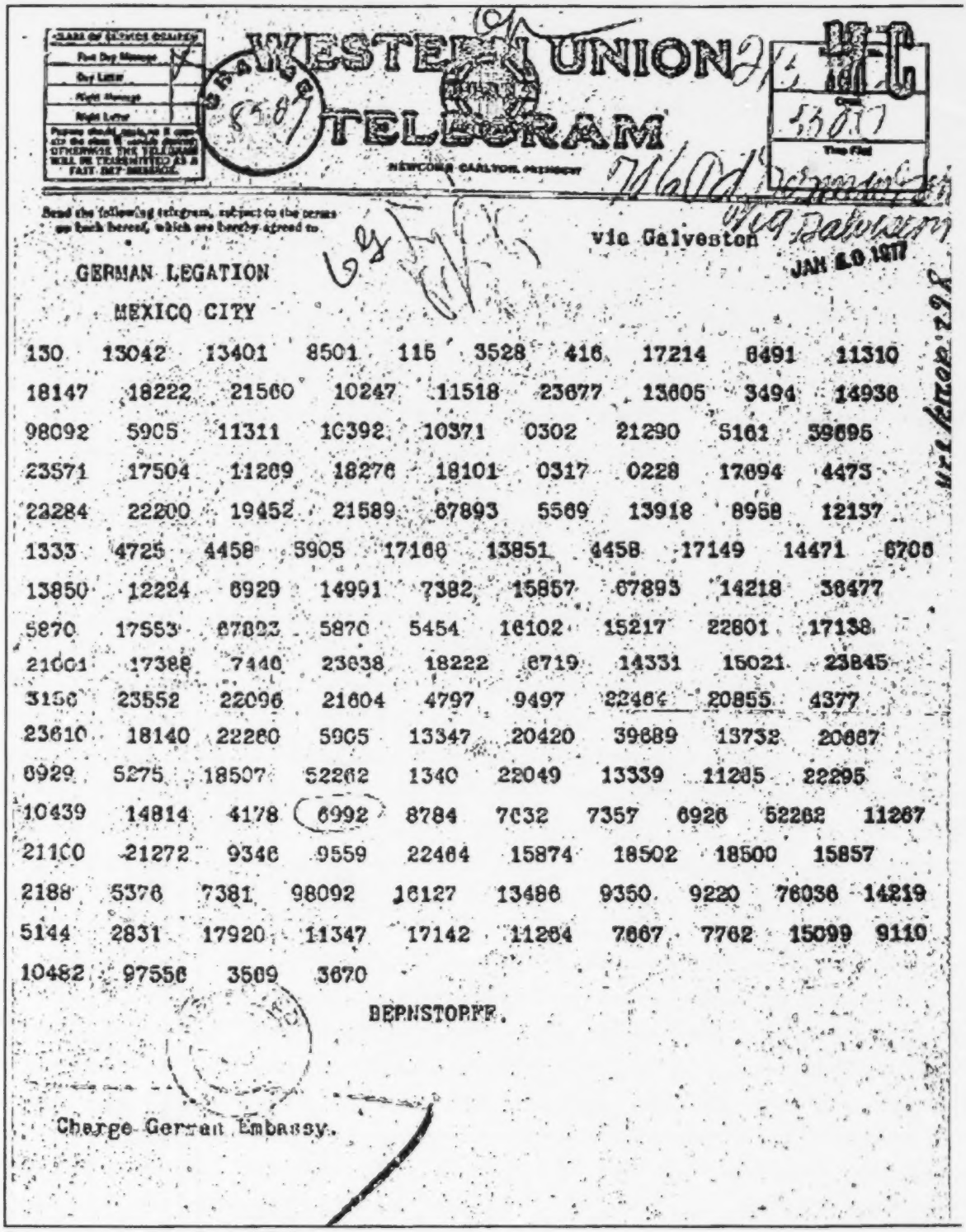
2. The Zimmermann telegram provides an opportunity to review geography with your students. Ask them to locate England, Germany, Mexico, and Japan on a world map or globe. Direct students to indicate on the map or globe the territory offered by the Germans to the Mexicans in the telegram. Ask them to calculate how much the territory offered to Mexico would increase the size of that country. What geographical advantages would the Germans gain by Mexican entry into the war? What was the role of Japan?

3. Discussion questions:
   a. What other documents have changed the course of American history? For example, consider the effects of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Monroe Doctrine, and the DeLome Letter.

b. What events in 1916 and 1917 contributed to the impact the Zimmermann telegram would have on the American public?

c. Would the United States have remained neutral if the Zimmermann telegram had not been revealed?

U.S. National Archives & Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408 • 1-86-NARA-NARA • 1-866-272-6272



WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

via Galveston

JAN 19 1917

GERMAN LEGATION

MEXICO CITY

130 13042 13401 8501 115 3528 416 17214 6491 11310
18147 18222 21560 10247 11518 23677 13605 3494 14936
98092 5905 11311 10392 10371 0302 21290 5161 39695
23571 17504 11269 18276 18101 0317 0228 17694 4473
23284 22200 19452 21589 67893 5569 13918 8958 12137
1333 4725 4458 5905 17166 13851 4458 17149 14471 6705
13850 12224 6929 14991 7382 15857 67893 14218 36477
5870 17553 67893 5870 5454 16102 15217 22801 17138
21001 17388 7440 23638 18222 6719 14331 15021 23845
3156 23552 22096 21604 4797 9497 22464 20855 4377
23610 18140 22260 5905 13347 20420 39689 13732 20667
6929 5275 18507 52262 1340 22049 13339 11265 22295
10439 14814 4178 6992 8784 7632 7357 6926 52262 11267
21100 21272 9346 9559 22464 15874 18502 18500 15857
2188 5376 7381 98092 16127 13486 9350 9220 76036 14219
5144 2831 17920 11347 17142 11264 7667 7762 15099 9110
10482 97556 3569 3670

BERNSTORFF.

Charge German Embassy.

Document 1: The Coded Telegram

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

...CLED
...ter 1-8-58
...rton, State Dept.
By Mack A Eddoff Archivist
Date Oct. 22, 1975

TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

FROM 2nd from London # 5747.

"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace." Signed, ZIMMERMANN.

Document 2: Decoded Message

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

___ Newspaper	___ Map	___ Advertisement
___ Letter	___ Telegram	___ Congressional record
___ Patent	___ Press release	___ Census report
___ Memorandum	___ Report	___ Other

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

___ Interesting letterhead	___ Notations
___ Handwritten	___ "RECEIVED" stamp
___ Typed	___ Other
___ Seals	

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:
_____

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:
_____

POSITION (TITLE):
_____

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?
_____

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:
_____
_____
_____

B. Why do you think this document was written?
_____
_____

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.
_____
_____

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:
_____
_____

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:
_____
_____

Designed and developed by the
Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.

U.S. National Archives & Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408 • 1-86-NARA-NARA • 1-866-272-6272

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☒ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").